



# CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION IN INDIA: A NEED TO FOCUS ON EDUCATION OF TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

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## ABSTRACT

Equality and equity are always a core of Indian Educational System. Our educational policy is trying to achieve this commitment which was driven and guided by our Constitutional values, which give and ensure the fundamental right to Education for every individual besides of their race, caste, class, gender and religion. We all are free to get an education to make ourselves as well as our nation get progressed. After independence, various measures have been established to fulfill this goal and serve education to all equally and without any hinder. However, educational access and equity remain quite elusive for some communities, such as the Third Gender (Transgender). In India, transgender people have been marginalized for many years, since the colonial period and still remain deprived, underprivileged, and ostracized. The purpose of this assignment is to highlight those challenges that minimize educational opportunities for trans-people in India by reviewing the historic isolation and marginalization, socio-cultural practices, resource deprivation and poverty, harsh social conditions and contemporary scenario. Additionally, this article will try to critically examine the emerging efforts and opportunities including their Constitutional educational rights to improve educational opportunities for them. To promote transgender Education with equity and equality. Also, tries to provide some suggestions to improve their status. The work is mainly based only on secondary data, which includes various literature resources i.e. books, periodical, research articles, official publication of government and Non- Governmental organizations, websites.

**KEYWORDS:** Contemporary Education, Challenges, Equality, Equity, Transgender.

*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"*

- Nelson Mandela

## INTRODUCTION:

Equality and equity are always a core of Indian educational system. Our educational policy is trying to achieve this commitment which was driven and guided by our Constitutional values, which give and ensure the fundamental right to Education to every individual besides their race, caste, class, gender and religion. We all are free to get an education to make ourselves as well as our nation get progressed. After independence, various measures have been established to fulfill this goal and serve education to all equally and without any hinder. However, educational access and equity remain quite elusive for some communities, such as the Third Gender (Transgender). In India, transgender people have been marginalized for many years, since the colonial period and still remain Deprived, underprivileged, and ostracized.

'Education'- this word has a lot of meaning and importance in the contemporary era. It (Education) is not just related to literacy. It has social, political, economical tendency within it as it is believed that Education is the powerful mean for social, economic and political transformation. A well-educated population, equipped with relevant knowledge and skills are crucial for economic and social development in the twenty-first century. Education is the most effective tool for socio-economic mobility and a key apparatus for building an equal and just society. In contrast lack of education not only affect the economic status of people nonetheless, also leads an individual or whole community towards social restraint which disrupts someone's position and dignity in society. Therefore, Indian Constitution Grantee Educational rights of every individual of this country to provide equal opportunity to every citizen to nurture and attain their potential, irrespective of caste, sex, religion or gender under the ambit of Article 21 and 21A. However, some marginalized sections of our society still deprived and fighting for their fundamental right i.e., right to education, and Transgender people are one of them a marginalized section who are in a vulnerable position in educational perspective. Transgender issues are a contemporary issue in India mainly after, their recognition by the state as the third gender. The transgender community is one of the extremely marginalized and vulnerable communities in India (PUCL-K,2003). They confront stigma in almost every portion of their life such as health, education, employment, social and political participation. Dominant part of the population is uneducated or undereducated thus barring them from taking an interest in social, cultural, political and financial exercises. Consequently, in contemporary era, access to education has been one of the most pressing demands of transgender(s) rights movements.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH PAPER:

This assignment mainly focuses on the observing the contemporary educational status of third gender in India.

## METHODOLOGY:

The study is organized with help of secondary data, which were collected from

various literature resources including; books, periodical, research articles, official publication of Government and Non- Governmental organizations, websites.

## Transgender a Nebulous Terminology:

Transgender is umbrella term, it used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, including female-to male and male-to-female sexually reassigned persons, cross-dressers, who identify themselves with the opposite gender (Singh.S, Dasgupta.S, Patnakar.P, Sinha M.,2013). Alike Western Context, in Indian context transgender terminology is ambiguous. In India, there are several local and regional terminologies and identities that are utilized to portray gender transgressions. Some of these may additionally have particular socio-social religious implications, for example, on the off chance that the of Hijra, Jogtas and kothis, Aravanis and so forth. Be that as it may, there is some disarray and huge cover among these Indian Identities; Kothi for example, is additionally a term utilized by MSM (Looking into the Next Millenium, 2000). Hence, it is noticed that, difficulties of classification and definition of transgender in Indian context because of overlap between gender identity and sexual orientation. Therefore, in this scenario "Gender and sexual orientations, gender roles and transgender issues are in a state of flux". Sometimes society used transgender as synonym for Hijra and other similar regional groups, but that's not correct, these communities are just a sub-category under the term transgender, it doesn't mean that transgender is equal to Hijra, not all transgenders are hijra there are some cultural and religious underpinning associated with hijra community, which provide them this identity in Indian societies, therefore not all gender-variants persons are identified as hijras, but all hijra can be identified as transgender. So, there is need of awareness and knowledge to understands these complex issues related transgender identity.

## From Past glory to contemporary humiliation:

Before understanding educational status and challenges of trans community we need to critically take a glimpse of transgender(s) history in India because the current isolation and marginalization in educational scenario of Transgender community cannot be understood without connecting the present to the past. The history of discrimination, isolation, and marginalization of Transgender community began with the British colonial rule. For India existence of transgender or third gender are not as new as for westerns countries. Historically evident that "Ancient India was tolerant and accommodated the Transgender community within the broader structure of society". Accounts of trans-community are recorded 4,000 years back. There is various mythological literature like Vedic and puranic literature and documents which given evidence of the existence of the third gender in several historical episodes. There is reference napunsaka or kliba or tritiye prakriti in the Vedic period the Vedes (1500 BC-500 BC) describe individuals as belonging to one of three separate categories, according to one's prakriti (nature). These are also evident in the Kamasutra, also in the Ramayana in which Lord rama bestows supernatural powers to the Transgender community and in Mahabharata in which Lord Krishna assumes the transgender role as Mohini to wed Aravan on the night before of his sacrificed. In a Medieval period, the Trans community has been seen to have a well-established role in both the royal courts

as well as the household. There is also evidence of the TG group rising to positions of power. On the contrary, the coming of the British to India changed the situation dramatically. TG group declared a criminal tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871<sup>1</sup> (Nanda,1999; Reddy,2005). Consequently, Criminalization deprived the TG group of their right to own land, reducing them to destitution. Therefore, they were forced to seek alternate sources of livelihood such as begging, extortion and sex work, effectively putting them beyond the social pale and leading of their exclusion from mainstream society and that constant surveillance, mistrust and the threat of criminal action, prejudice and social intolerance, lack of educational and employment opportunities, combined to entrap the TG group in a vicious cycle of isolation, poverty, exploitation and violence. After Independence, the law was abolished in 1949, but it was not helped in abolished mistrust among society towards trans-community. Even today, they endure stigmatized, socially excluded and deprived in every domain of life. Pushed to live in hidden corner or margins of society as invisible and faces so many problems, even for their basic fundamental needs, like health care, livelihood, education, housing, freedom to access in public spaces without fear and humiliation. Hence, they are often seen in their traditional role of Badhai<sup>2</sup>, a larger portion of community Involved in sex work, begging, cooking and other household work. Which hinder their economic and social status in society.

Now the ignorance towards trans-community slightly changing, some initiative and efforts are visible now these days in India as well as at Global level. Which were the result of worldwide spread social movement against trans- community human rights violations.

### Educational Rights and provisions for Transgender:

At present, there are very few provision and rights of transgender persons in India, some of them are briefly discussed in this section, Article 21A 'section 3(1) Right to Education Act, 2009', Government of India, is very important existing provision for the education of Transgender it states that *Every child of the Age of six to fourteen years shall have a right to free and compulsory education in neighbourhood school till completion of elementary education* (2009, GOI). And Article 29, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) afore-said *'The Education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential'* (UNCRC,1989). This two has been playing a crucial role in promoting Inclusive Education and helps in mainstreaming for transgender Community. Despite this two, the rights of transgender person bill 2014 which were passed in 2015. The bill, Under Section 13 and 14 provides and inclusive education system, which does not discriminate against the transgender community and provides for all educational institutions funded or recognized by the appropriate government would ensure that the transgender community has an equal access to schools and colleges so that they can maximize on the social and academic development. It also lays down the duty to *"monitor participation, progress in terms of attainment levels, and completion of education, in respect of every transgender student."* On another hand, Section 21 calls for reservation of seats in government institutes. Besides these, there are several schemes and educational provisions also introduced by different states and educational institutions for the promotion of trans-community at every level of education, for instance, Inclusion of the third gender in admission and jobs related documents, reservation under OBC, Special scholarship schemes for them etc.

### Role of Education in addressing the needs of Transgender community in Indian society:

Equal access to education of transgender without discrimination has been one of the most pressing demands in the contemporary era. Education may be acknowledged Concerning illustration a fundamental prerequisite Furthermore an essential straight to the subjects for any country. It will be a capable instrument to diminishing imbalance and inequalities. Similarly, as it could provide for individuals the capacity to get to be autonomous. transgenders, who run across separation, stigma, and discrimination in large portions spheres, have a specific need to this. strengthening transgender community will be a worldwide issue. Education is viewed as a critical point of reference of transgender social, political and economic empowerment since it empowers them to confront the difficulties, to go up against the stigma and discrimination and change their status in society. Education of this community is the most intense device of progress their position in the general public. Still, extensive transgender people in society are ignorant, backward, frail, and abused. Education too diminishes imbalances and capacities as a process for enhancing their status inside the family. Empowerment and capacity building provide the third gender a path to acquire practical information and learning for their better livelihoods. In absence of Equal and inclusive Educational opportunity is enforced them trapped in a vicious cycle of marginalization.

### Educational Status of Trans-community:

The foundation of education contributes as sound place for the children to develop and meet the difficulties of the world. The circumstance is exceptionally terrible for third gender individuals as there is no thought of getting the education for this group. they have no acknowledgment and equivalent access to education and no place to make their lives like others. Although after recognition of the third gender by Indian Constitution there are rising calls for Education of Trans-community are emerging. Besides, this there are some examples of trans- people who fight this situation successfully and became educated and working on

reputed places, Manabi Bandyopadhyay worked as a principal in a government college in West Bengal and Amruta Alpesh soni as an advocacy officer for the states of Punjab, Haryana, and Chhattisgarh for the NACP<sup>3</sup>. Kalki Subramaniam India's first transgender entrepreneur holds two Master's degree in Journalism and Mass Communication and International Relations. Padmini Prakash became the first transgender television news anchor in the country. All of them display how education plays a prominent role in their lives. According to activist Kalki Subramaniam, "I believe only education can empower transgenders. Many of them, almost 60-70 per cent, have been abandoned by their families. Because of rejection, they lost the opportunity to get a good education and thus are not eligible for a good job, good money, good livelihood. That is why most transgenders are taking to prostitution and begging. With little money, they can't meet their medical expenses, surgery expenses, living in a separate room, etc." However, the still large population of trans-people are in experience vulnerable situation, due to the absence of education and social prejudices. The majority of the transgender are drop-out at Middle school. At the time the transgender knows their gender identity. As a result, they are not able to continue the Higher studies (Babu, 2015). Similarly, Kerala state report also reveals that, 58% of transgender students before completing 10th grade. Due to multiple reasons like several kinds of harassment, Negative experience and financial constraints and so on (GOK, 2015). As a result, Literacy rate of transgender is low in India, as per 2011 Census records, there are only 56.07% transgender are literate in India.

### Educational Challenges faced by Transgender(s):

There are a number of challenges which were faced by transgenders in the educational scenario, which keeps them in the margins of society. Some of the Problems and issues are discussed in this section which affects education status of trans in India without discrimination and inequality.

### Lack of Awareness among Transgender:

It is noticed that there is a lack of knowledge and awareness among transgender-community about their educational rights, social and educational schemes or policies. It will affect their participation in education. A Study shows that there is limited knowledge of transgender on their educational rights and other privileges, mainly on state government runs policies and schemes. It is also evident in the study many of trans- community members are not even aware of their OBC'S recognition and reservation guidelines, how to avail scholarships and what documents they need to require to get these benefits (Jeyaseelan,2015). Hence, these concerns will hinder their educational participation and accessibility.

### Discrimination and stigma:

The Experience of discrimination and stigma in educational settings is also a reason for exclusion of trans-people in education. It is evident that trans-students are faced multiple forms of verbal and physical discrimination and stigma by teachers, peers and administrative staff, because of their gender identity. Discriminative nature of the teachers and peers are playing important role in discontinuation or drop-out of school among gender-variant students (Rajesh & Naved, 2013; Praxis,2014).

### Lack of supportive infrastructure and amenities:

It is noticeable that, there is a lack of knowledge about transgender(s) identities among teachers, and despite this fact, there is no in-service as well as pre- service workshops and programs are introduced by Teacher training institutes. None of the school gives counseling to transgender students about their changing gender and sexuality. As well as they're not facilities of separate washrooms or gender-neutral washrooms in schools and higher education institutions. Whereas toilets one of the places in which, trans are mostly abused. There is always a risk of sexual harassment in washrooms. It is also a major contributing factor for affection educational status of the community.

### Insensitive approach and isolation:

Educational institutions and related official and teachers also have not much knowledge about transgender and behavior, lack of identifying gender variant learner and their special needs and issues makes transgender(s) alienated in classrooms. They unable to find any support towards their teachers. It also reported in various research work that there is also a lack of sensitization among teachers as well as educational management, their behavior towards them are often full of humiliation, verbal and physical abuse (GLSEN,2009; Rajesh & Naved, 2013; Neathravathi.G,2015).

### Sexual and Psychological harassment:

Transgender students are victims of sexual abuse and psychological harassment in schools and other educational institutions. Harassment such as mistreatment, bullying, sexual exploitation such as to force for oral sex from peers and unfortunately by teachers also, which sometimes convert into physical violence (Sathya; Thasian,2015). Consequently, such type of ill-treatment and harassment distress their psychological health and its affects their educational performance and educational intuitions become threatening place for them. That is why due to these bad experience and hostile environment pushed them to withdraw their education (Rajesh & Naved, 2013; Praxis,2014; Rivers,2004).

### Lack of Inclusive curriculum:

In the Indian context, curriculum tightly associated with only two genders. It is not recognized trans-community; existence is invisible in curriculum and related

textbooks. As a result, trans-students not able to connect with that kind of resources where all the examples, issues and history are only talked about two genders. It will give the essence of isolation and alienation to them. Similarly, sex education and adolescent education not address their issues, behavior, and identity.

#### Financial obstructions:

Financial barriers are that foremost factor, which influences their education. Generally, transgenders are rejected or excluded by their own families at very early age. Subsequently, they were not able to continue their education. They starting earning for their survival within jamaat<sup>4</sup> or indecently by doing a low level or socially unrespectable jobs. After being desire and aspirations of education were not fulfill by them, because if they were going for education, what about their earnings and how they will survive without livelihood option. It is well described by one trans-individual Sri Devi, During the interactive session which were held under the department of Department of adult continuing education & Extension, She said during discussion that "If we go for the educational classes & skills training programme, it will mar our daily earning and our survival would be in danger as we don't have any family support, so it will be difficult for us to join skills development programme and educational programme (Kumar, 2014)." This indicate is issues need to focus. It demonstrates us after recognition and acceptance, provision, there are hidden or covert barriers which constraint education of trans- community. We have to recognize acknowledge these gaps and tries to find out some ways which overcome barriers like this.

#### Restriction and pressure under Community by Guru<sup>4</sup>:

In the Indian setting, Transgender, for the most part, lives in their organized social limits. In Which Hierarchy and power relations are unmistakably observed. They a few traditions, customs, and standards, division of work and obligations, which need to take after by each individual from the group. From one viewpoint, this social structure gives them security, collaboration, and financial support, on alternate individuals from the gathering were additionally set up in control of Guru. Which once in a while discourage their access to Education. (Rajesh & Naved, 2013).

#### Improving educational opportunities: Recommendations

Above Section, help us in to critically understands, various factor affecting education of trans-community. Discrimination against trans-community is embedded or deeply rooted in our educational settings. We also need to understand and accept this harsh reality of our education system. Which enables us to work upon this gaps and weakness, which hinder trans-community educational right. Based on analysis of various educational issues and challenges confronted by transgender communities some suggestions are given in this section which helps to make educational systems trans- inclusive.

#### Inclusion of Transgender identity in school curriculum in addition to Teacher training programs:

Reframing notion of gender in Curriculum as well as in Teacher training programs "Teacher education programs have the responsibility of preparing teachers to support the growth of transgender individuals at all levels of the education (Rands,2009)." Sensitizing teachers to provide a supportive environment in classrooms for trans-people.

A comprehensive curriculum should be a frame that alters the bias in education and provides judgment- free information and fosters a liberal outlook with regards to matters of gender, embracing orientation, identity, and behavior of gender- variants.

#### Supportive and secure environment:

Schools and colleges are required to provide a safe learning environment free from physical or verbal harassment for trans-people supportive and secure environment such as promoting Gender-neutral toilets, counselor and anti-harassment cell in all Educational institutions are most crucial facilities which need to take care of inclusive education of trans-people.

#### Special provision for economic support:

Vocational training centers should be established for giving the transgender new occupational opportunities. Additionally, some special provision, like scholarships will also be creating for economic support of trans-people, which reduces their dilemma of choose between earning and education.

#### Promoting Research:

There is a requirement for centered systematized component of research and scholastic exercises to create more information/data to distinguish and comprehend the issues identified with different parts of their life and help outline policies through research and scholarly program that would bring a compelling and long-term change in their socio-economic status.

#### Creating Awareness and sensitization among various stakeholders:

Sensitize the teachers, administration, parents as well as learners with regards to transgender identity, not only as victims, like members of society who holds equal rights and freedom like other two genders have. There is need to generate awareness so, that the transgender is viewed and understood as a culture, community and a movement, who neglected by our society for many years and

remained as invisible for us. Creation of awareness in the school is vital to creating sensitive and conducive environment thereby could increase the ability to stay in school for the gender variant person. Correspondingly, it is essential to spread awareness among trans -people about their rights, policies, schemes, and privileges, because of the lack of awareness towards their rights and opportunities will defeat the initiative and efforts which they get after a long battle.

#### The requirement of clarity on various perspectives:

There is need of some clarity to the administration on various perspectives related to Transgender, mainly, who is transgender and who is not, clarity on terminology. Various kind of trans-identities recognized in India. Transgender and matter of sexual orientation. Similarly, measures and issues related to the reservation under OBC categories and documentation.

#### Implementation of policies and provisions on ground reality:

It is urgent need to enforced all related policies and provisions on ground reality with full of enthusiasm. Also, should require add provisions for transgender people in existing policies, educational programs and related schemes like SSA, DPEP etc., framing special inclusive approach and programme in educational scenario will able to help transgender community attaining equal level of education as well as socio-economic status in India.

#### CONCLUSION:

Against the backdrop of historic, overt and covert discrimination, marginalization, and isolation of transgender community in India, a renewed hope has arisen after legal recognition of the third gender. To acknowledge the years of neglect of trans-community, the educational system and institutions as a whole should adopt policies that address the complex challenges of this marginalized section, there is urgent need to focus on education for the transgender community. Since it is a high time that educational community and Central and the state government come ahead and take all promising steps for bringing the Transgender community into the mainstream.

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#### Notes:

- I. Section 2, Criminal Tribes Act, 1871
- II. A traditional work associated with hijra community. "The donation given to hijra when they perform for the birth of the male child and marriages".
- III. National AIDS Control Project.
- IV. Head of Hijra Community. "Literally, teacher or spiritual guide."
- V. Theme of session is 'Education and Employment Opportunities for Transgender.' Held on, 19th April 2014, DACCE, New Delhi.